

## House Judiciary

### Legislative agenda for the VT Center for Crime Victim Services

1/13/15

During the 2013 and 2014 sessions, the legislature and Center was focused on declining revenues to the Center's special funds which prompted a legislative study committee to look at where the Center could make cuts, where could we find efficiencies and how to improve revenues. This effort resulted in the passage of Act 126. There are two outstanding issues from Act 126 which need to be addressed during the 2015 session:

1. A technical amendment to change the enactment language from Act 126. Much of this act tried to improve the enforcement tools and process available to the restitution unit to improve collections of restitution. The enactment language only applied to restitution judgment orders issued after 7/1/14. The net result of this requires the unit to maintain two systems of enforcement – one for orders issued before 7/1/14 and one for orders issued after 7/1/14. Administratively, this would be very challenging and labor intensive. We are supporting language that would allow the new enforcement tools and process apply to all current and future restitution judgment orders.
2. Session language required the Center, the VT Hospital Association, the VT Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence and 2 insurers (BC/BS and MVP) to study the issue of rape exam payments. Currently rape victims can opt out sending a rape exam bill to their insurer and have the state of VT pay for the exam because of privacy and safety concerns. This group has been meeting and looking at ways to have insurance pay for these exams but still protect a victim's privacy as well as reducing the actual cost of rape exams when a victim does not have insurance. We hope to have a recommendation to present to the Judiciary committees this session.

Another initiative that the Center wants to pursue this biennium is a review of title 13, chapter 165 which details the rights of crime victims in the criminal justice system. A group of victim advocates, crime victims and stakeholders came together to review VT statutes governing crime victim rights and looked at the practical realities of how to ensure victims are afforded these rights in a

meaningful and consistent manner. Our research has shown that victim rights' are not uniformly recognized and honored across the state. Many victims are not notified in a timely fashion about key hearings and proceedings, not given the opportunity to be heard, and not given proper or timely notification about release conditions which can compromise victim safety. We have consulted with national experts and have a draft of changes we would like to propose to chapter 165. I will be approaching members of this committee to help sponsor a bill to help make this happen.